OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

What we did; What we learned

Background:

Mitchell Field is a 119.3-acre coastal site with deep-water pier and dock including 2,630 feet of prime shoreline on Middle Bay. The site is accessible by road from State Highway 123. On-site there are approximately a dozen buildings of 1950's era vintage and a water storage tank with a 100,000-gallon capacity. Paved roads lead from the highway access point to the waterfront. Electrical service is available on-site. Approximately 40 acres are heavily wooded, the remainder of the property is open space.

Commissioned in 1954, the U.S. Navy Fuel Depot operated throughout the Cold War to supply fuel to the Brunswick Naval Air Station. In 1991, the Navy determined that it would be more economical to truck in fuel from Searsport and, on March 31, 1992, officially shut down the facility. The 1995 Defense Authorization Act authorized the conveyance of the property to the Town of Harpswell which renamed it the George J. Mitchell Field. Since then the property has fallen into a state of neglect without a comprehensive vision for its redevelopment.

Over the past 10 years, the citizens of Harpswell have made efforts to propose and respond to development opportunities at Mitchell Field. At a Town meeting on June 23, 1997, the Town approved conservation, recreation, marine occupations and marine research uses for the property. To date only provisions for recreation activities have taken place. There are two major reasons for this: first, the lack of a community generated, Town-approved vision for the property and second, the lack of a master plan that explicitly states what uses are desired on the property, where they should be located, and how they will interact with each other to create a harmonious and integrated site.

A valuable component of the public participation process, the Mitchell Field Committee was charged with providing input and support in preparations of public meetings; providing outreach to ensure wide community involvement in public meetings; and to monitor the process by offering the Consultant and Town feedback and advice, and to provide overall guidance to the planning effort. Over the course of the planning process, the Committee held ten meetings with the Consultant. The mission of the Mitchell Field Committee is to develop a comprehensive master plan for Mitchell Field, to include proposals for the former navy housing, the pier, the water tower and any existing buildings or structures as well as all open space, fields and wooded acreage.

The Town of Harpswell issued a Request for Proposals for Consultant Services in January of 2007. The firm of *Holt & Lachman Architects/Planners* was selected to facilitate the planning process, and was hired in March of 2007. According to the requirements of the Town's RFP, the consultant proposed a vigorous community planning effort to meet a Fall 2007 deadline for completing this planning effort.

The original goal of the master planning process was to engage the public to create a community vision for short- and long-term uses for the entire Mitchell Field parcel. In May, a ship-building company, Washburn and Doughty, contacted the town of Harpswell in the hopes of locating their

operation on Mitchell Field. The town voted, 90% to 10%, to begin negotiations with Washburn and Doughty, and that considerations regarding the ship-building operation were to be integrated into the Master Planning Process. With the inclusion of the Washburn and Doughty proposal before the town, the planning process was timeline was intensified to deliver recommendations to the Town by late summer, 2007.

Public Participation Plan:

The Town, Mitchell Field Committee, and Consultant begin preparations in March 2007 to schedule a series of open, participatory events to engage citizens in the planning process. The key events included three evening Forums and an all-day Community Design Workshop over the course of summer 2007. A Public Review Session was also reserved for scheduling soon after the completion of Forum 3.

The Forums were designed as interactive events to bring participants together to gather community opinions and discuss issues ranging from potential reuses of the property, concerns and aspirations for potential redevelopment, and ideas on appropriate designs. Forum 2 included small group sessions, facilitated by graduate planning students from the Community Planning and Development program of the Muskie School of Public Service.

Citizens listen to expert presentations at Forum 1.

Forum # 1 was held on June 6th, 2007 at Harpswell Islands School from 6:30 – 8:30 PM. Approximately sixty (60) citizens attended this forum. The purpose of the forum was to orient the community to the planning process, and educate citizens about the existing conditions of Mitchell Field. First, engineers spoke about the site's infrastructure. Randy Tome, an engineer at Woodard and Curran, discussed the buildings. Andrew Johnston, an engineer at SYTDesign, spoke about the water tower, the roads, the water system, and the electrical system on the site. Barney Baker, from Baker Design Consultants, discussed shoreland zoning, the pier structure, and water access. Next, Naji Akliadiss, Hank Andolsek, and Jean Firth, all from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), spoke to the environmental conditions of the site. Citizens learned that:

- Mitchell Field is basically safe for people to recreate, and can be made safe for any proposed use
- The amount of water available from the wells can be increased for most likely proposed uses
- Depending on proposed uses, additional testing and remediation will be required
- Proposed uses will drive needed repairs and costs to infrastructure
- Roads and electrical systems are in good shape and can support most foreseeable development, buildings are at the end of their useful life
- Pier has significant structural issues. Future uses will drive required costs

[See Appendix A for a complete report of Forum #1]

Forum # 2 was held on June 26th, 2007 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Harpswell Islands School. Approximately forty (40) citizens attended this forum. The purpose of the forum was to review the findings from Forum 1, and to begin exploring hopes and fears, and potential principles to guide redevelopment decisions. Working in small, facilitated groups, citizens brainstormed and prioritized key hopes and fears about land use and values, and brainstormed potential principles that might address those hopes or concerns. The intent of this exercise was to help participants to see the linkage between hopes and fears, and to create principles – that might relate to process, policy, or design – that could guide decision-making to secure hoped for outcomes, and avoid fear-based outcomes. The hopes for land uses that were high-priority for the group became a list of Highest and Best Land Uses, and the high-priority fears for land uses became Undesirable Land Uses. These became the Final Report for the group. At the conclusion of small group discussions, all participants reassembled in the auditorium, and the Final Reports were presented to the large group.

After transcribing and tabulating all brainstormed ideas, the following were postulated as key results from Forum # 2:

Guiding Principles for Redevelopment

- Uses should promote public access to the water
- Uses are sensitive to the environment
- Mix of development should pay for itself or add to the tax base
- Priority to uses that enhance well-being and quality of community, uses that allow and foster community cohesion
- Maintain options for future generations
- Involve citizens in every step of the decision-making process
- Balance economic development and conservation

Team 6 brainstorms ideas about land uses.

Highest and best land uses that were listed by several teams included open space and recreation, boat building that is not heavy industry, and a marine research/education facility. Undesirable land uses for many teams included uses or overdevelopment alien to the character of Harpswell, big box stores or an industrial park, and uses that require large parking lots / asphalt.

[See Appendix B for a complete report of Forum #2 findings.]

The Community Design Workshop:

The Community Design Workshop was held on Sunday, July 15th from noon to 5:00 p.m. at Harpswell Islands School. This all-day meeting was the major public event in the Mitchell Field planning process. In order to organize the complex logistics for this Workshop, citizens were asked to pre-register. Approximately 75 citizens pre-registered, and about 65 citizens attended the workshop.

Team 5 members talk about their land use diagram.

Prior to the Community Design Workshop, all of those who pre-registered for the workshop received a Briefing Book. **[See Appendix C for a copy of the Briefing Book.]** The Briefing Book provided an agenda for the workshop; background information on Mitchell Field; aerial maps of the area; case studies of various building types that were identified in Forum #2[1] as being of interest to the community (e.g., recreational amenities and open space; housing types of various densities; and a neighborhood-scaled retail/office building); and primers of community design principles.

The Mitchell Field Committee and town staff (particularly Jay Chace, Town Planner) provided invaluable logistic support and preparations for the Community Design Workshop.

A key component of "staffing" a Community Design Workshop is to provide for professional facilitation and professional design assistance for the small group sessions. The Consultant worked with students from the Muskie School of Public Service's graduate program in community planning and development in order to provide trained facilitators for the small group sessions.

[1] At Forum #2, on June 26th, participants in small breakout groups shared their thoughts on potential principles and uses for Mitchell Field. For more background and findings from this community forum, see Appendix B

Team 7 discusses Principles as a facilitator records their ideas.

In all, 8 Muskie students received training and participated as facilitators for the Workshop. To provide for professional design assistance, the Consultant worked with the Maine Chapter of the American Institute of Architects to create a continuing education opportunity for Maine architects. This effort resulted in the participation of eight architects for the Workshop.

The Community Design Workshop brought together residents, property and business owners, and public officials to work in teams with professional designers to create maps, drawings and sketches that image a great future for Mitchell Field. The Workshop began with an optional lunch from 11 A.M. to noon, and a brief orientation session for all participants, after which all participants went to their small group team sessions for the main portion of the day (3 hour and 45 minute working session). Each team had a private classroom for their working session, and each team had a trained facilitator from the Muskie School, and one professional architect for design assistance. In addition, three experts attended the workshop to act as consultants to teams throughout the day as needed. The experts were Barney Baker, a marine engineer from Baker Design Consultants; Tony Muench, a landscape architect who was on hand to help each team develop their site drawings, and Alan Holt, architect and planner from Holt & Lachman. The day ended with all teams reporting back to the main assembly hall to make team reports.

Once in the classroom, teams engaged in a series of exercises guided by their facilitator and resulting in a redevelopment plan. These exercises began with introductions, and facilitators reviewing the ground rules and schedule for the day. Three exercises were scheduled as well as team presentations.

The exercises were (1) establishing working principles to guide the day's work, (2) engaging in a fiscal impacts game, and (3) designing a site plan. Following the exercises, teams coordinated their final plan and developed a visual and oral presentation.

Exercise 1: WORKING PRINCIPLES FOR REDEVELOPMENT

The first exercise, to establish working principles to guide the day's work, consisted of teams being presented with redevelopment principles that emerged from Forum 2. These were provided for suggestions only—teams could adopt or reject the suggested principle, edit the principles, and add additional principles of their own.

The following principles were listed by a majority of the teams at the Workshop, and can be understood as Principles for Redevelopment for the Master Planning process. For the most part, the Workshop verified the draft Principles as derived from Forum 2. The rest (underlined) were not listed explicitly by teams, but are evident in site plans.

PRINCIPLE	NUMBER OF TEAMS (PERCENTAGE)
▪ Any development on the site, public or private, should leave the vast majority of the parcel in public, open space	10 (100%)
▪ Site will have light amount of private development (10 acres or less)	7 (87.5%)
▪ Any private development on the waterfront will be balanced by opportunity for public use	7 (87.5%)
▪ Involve citizens in every step of the decision-making process	7 (87.5%)
▪ Promote public access to the water	7 (87.5%)
▪ Maintain options for future generations	6 (75%)
▪ Sensitive to the environment	6 (75%)
▪ Balance economic development and conservation	5 (62.5%)
▪ Mix of development should pay for itself or add to tax base	5 (62.5%)
▪ Foster community cohesion	5 (62.5%)

Team 4 presents their Principles for Redevelopment.

[See Appendix F for greater detail on this exercise and results]

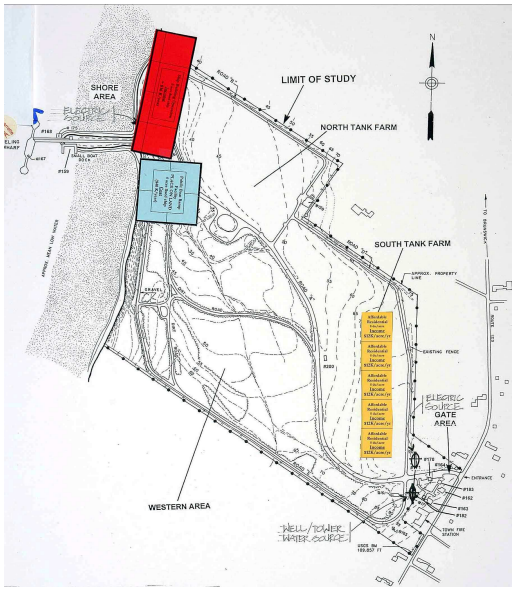
Exercise 2: FISCAL IMPACTS GAME

The next exercise created an opportunity for teams to explore potential land use scenarios. Participants were shown a list of potential site uses generated at Forum 2. The list was divided into two columns, Public Amenities and Private Development. This exercise was intended to help citizens explore how uses could physically relate to the study site and to each other, and to examine the potential economic impact of these uses (assuming public costs for community amenities, and tax revenues for private development). The exercises was designed to be interactive; that is, most teams cycled through several land use scenarios.

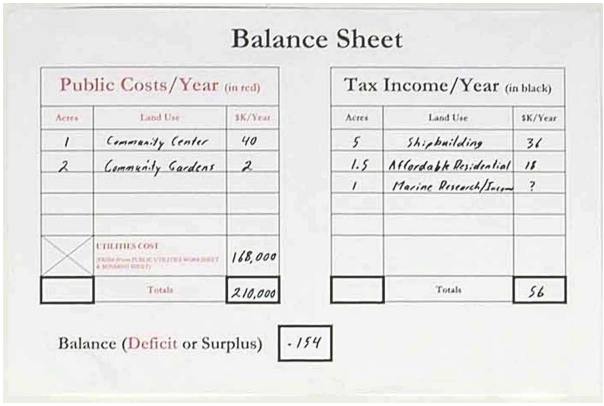
First, team members had a chance to add to the list of land uses if they wanted to. Some teams did, including a wind farm, a harbor center, and so on. Next, facilitators displayed the Case Study Board. Case Studies are used to establish a common language around which citizens and professionals can share in envisioning land use types and patterns. Each Case Study outlined a type, quantity and quality of development, and keyed in projected tax revenues that could be generated from such development (or in the case of public development, projected annual costs for servicing a capital debt payment and maintenance). The Case Studies had been introduced in the Briefing Book for the Workshop, and participants understood that the Case Studies were not meant to suggest that a certain type of development should occur on the site, but rather to serve as a starting point for discussion about fiscal impacts. The Case Study Board is a foam core board that shows information about and photos of the case studies.

The economic information from the Case Studies was transferred onto color-coded, "game chips" which participant could mix and match in scenarios to graphically understand relative land areas required for various scenarios, and the relative economic impact. The game chips are either fixed chips (a type of development with fixed acreage and a fixed amount of either cost or revenue) or

variable chips (team members can decide how much acreage the development covers, and the cost or revenue will change accordingly).



Team 2's game board.



Balance Sheet

Public Costs/Year (in red)			Tax Income/Year (in black)		
Acres	Land Use	$K/Year	Acres	Land Use	$K/Year
1	Community Center	40	5	Shipbuilding	30
2	Community Gardens	2	1.5	Affordable Residential	18
			1	Marine Research/Tourism	?
	UTILITIES COST	168,000			
	Totals	210,000		Totals	56

Balance (Deficit or Surplus) -154

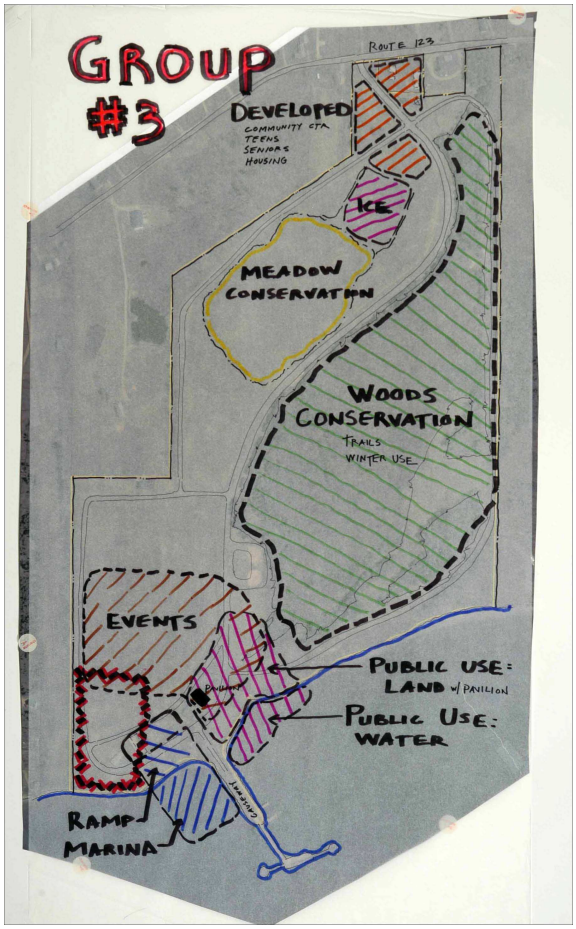
An example of a team Balance Sheet. **[See Appendix E for a transcription of team balance sheets]**

Participants placed different combinations of game chips (teams were encouraged to try out many development scenarios) over an aerial map of the site (see Team 2's game board above), and used a Balance Sheet to find out whether the mix of development would be a deficit or a surplus. Different scenarios were sketched onto trace paper, and these land use diagrams were used as a basis for the next exercise.

Exercise 3: SITE PLAN DESIGN

The final step for the Design Workshop teams involved creating illustrative concept site designs. Architects helped teams create renderings of what their developments might look like, and each team created a concept site plan for where buildings, open spaces and connections would be located, as well as the corresponding acreage needed for each use. The site plan design became the central focal point of each team's final presentation board.

The final step for teams at the Workshop involved translating their desired land use onto an illustrative site plan. Copies of all the team illustrative plans are included in **Appendix D: Display Boards**.



Team 3's Site Plan includes woods and meadow conservation.

The three-step process that each team went through at the Community Design Workshop offered opportunities for participants to explore potential land uses from a variety of viewpoints. This multi-step process was designed to foster a thorough discussion and exploration of potential development scenarios, and explore the potential to integrate public and private development. This also offered several "cross checks" for understanding participant's intent as included in their final team report.

There were eight teams at Community Design Workshop, but two of the eight teams produced two plans each. Therefore, a total of ten plans were produced at the Workshop.

The spreadsheets and charts in this report **[Appendices G – I]** outline the various land uses and the acreage assigned to those uses as identified by the participant teams during the Community Design Workshop. **Appendix G** includes a summary land use chart of all team data, as well as raw land use data collected from the display boards.

The Acreage Allocation spreadsheet in **Appendix H** includes a row for each plan; a row indicating the total number of acres per use of all the plans combined; and a row indicating the number of plans that included each use. The spreadsheet displaying private land uses also includes the average number of acres per use of the 10 plans that included private development; the average number of acres per use of all the plans; and the average number of acres per use of the plans that included each individual use. Land uses highlighted in grey on the spreadsheet (community center, marina, public boat launch, boat building facility) had a pre-specified, fixed number of acres that teams could not increase or decrease. These fixed acreage amount are based on "rules of thumb" for the amount of land that is appropriately allocated for specified uses. These "rules of thumb" are explained in detail under the Case Studies that were supplied to participants in the Briefing Book, and during the Community Design Workshop.

Besides public land uses the first spreadsheet includes a column displaying a total of acreage of public uses (community center, marina, public boat launch, beach, community garden, amphitheater, ice rink, festival/events space, pavilion, observation tower, and harbor center); and a column of conservation and low intensity uses and corresponding acreage.

The private land uses spreadsheet includes a column displaying a total of acreage of private uses (comprised of boat building facility; affordable, mixed income, and market housing; small retail/office, marine research facility; light industry; and wind farm) developed in each plan.

Team 6's site plan.

The chart of Acreage Totals **[Appendix I]** highlights development totals per team, and takes a cursory look at the amount of undeveloped land on Mitchell Field.

RESULTS OF LAND USE EXERCISE FROM THE COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP:

As indicated on the Acreage Allocation of Land Use sheet **[Appendix H]**, the 10 plans produced at the Community Design Workshop showed a range of potential public and private development scenarios. Some of the key findings include:

Public Amenities:

- 8 plans (80%) showed a public boat launch
- 8 plans (80%) showed a public beach
- Half the plans (50%) showed a community garden
- Half the plans (50%) showed an amphitheatre
- The amount of public development (in terms of acreage) ranged from as little as 3 acres to a high of 24 acres
- **Average acreage devoted to public amenities: 11.5 acres**

Conservation and Low Intensity Use

- 9 plans (90%) dedicated land to conservation and low intensity use (passive recreation, trails)
- **Average acreage devoted to conservation and low intensity use: 55 acres**

Private Development

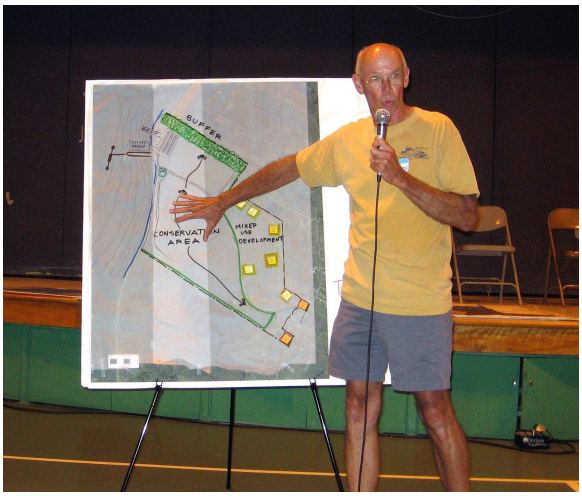
- 10 plans (100%) showed some private development
- 7 plans (70%) showed development of a boat-building facility
- 6 plans (60%) showed development of affordable housing
- **Average acreage devoted to private development: 8.6 acres**

Undeveloped

- All ten plans (100%) left some land undeveloped (no public amenities or private development indicated). The "Undeveloped" column in the table below shows acreage of undeveloped land, subtracted from 120 acres – the area of Mitchell Field. This column includes the land that was dedicated to conservation and low intensity use.
- **Average acreage of undeveloped land: 100 acres**

PRESENTATIONS

Final visual presentations were mounted on two 4 ft. x 4 ft. pieces of foam core board and were to include the team's list of working Principles for Redevelopment, the land use diagram created during the Fiscal Impacts game and corresponding balance sheet, and the final site plan. Additional space was available for mounting vignettes or other details about the team's plan. Next, each team chose a citizen (not a facilitator or committee member) to explain the team's work in a presentation.



The day concluded with teams returning to the auditorium where each team gave an oral presentation reviewing the contents of their display board. Presentations were videotaped by the town to be aired on the local access station. All team report boards were photographed for digital recording.

Team 8 presents their plan.

Following the workshop, the Consultant team began an analysis of all the plans generated at the workshop. The analysis was conducted to find themes and commonalities among the plans. From these commonalities, suggested models for redevelopment could be created and presented to the public at Forum 3.

Forum 3 was held July 31, 2007 at Harpswell Islands School. Holt and Lachman Architects, in conjunction with Baker Design Consultants, presented the suggested models for redevelopment. Approximately fifty (50) people attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to present the analysis and findings of the Community Design Workshop, and to present concept plans that attempted to integrate the findings from the public planning process.

In response to the findings from the Community Design Workshop **[See Appendices D – J]**, the Consultant team prepared five concept plans (three housing options, two waterfront options) for public review. The basis for the plans included the following assumptions:

- Present options that meet the Principles for Redevelopment as developed from the public process
- Present option plans that allocate approximately 8 acres to private development
  - Note: The average team plans from the Community Design Workshop allocated 8.6 acres to private development (See Appendix H)
- Allocate about 10 acres to public development/public amenities
  - Note: The average team plans from the Community Design Workshop allocated 11.5 acres to public/civic development
  - Provide pedestrian access / recreation use of shallow water
  - Keep woods undeveloped; for passive recreation use only
  - Provide access for town boat ramp
  - Keep fields between the road and waterfront largely open and undeveloped – for passive and light intensity recreation use
- Base concept plans on careful analysis of plan designs from the Community Design Workshop
- Show proposed land uses that were supported by the public process (Forums and the Community Design Workshop)
- Buffer north boundary from neighbors
- Ship building must share deepwater access with public use
- Concentrate affordable housing along road at village scale (60% of teams at the Community Design Workshop included affordable housing in their site plan)

A vigorous, open public discussion followed a brief presentation of the Consultant's three housing options and two waterfront options. The Consultant will take the questions and comments from Forum 3 into account when preparing a Final Report. **[See Appendix K for review and presentation of all five concept plans, and public comment.]**